

23 December 1997

Re: NEPA Technical Inquiry 0156 - Cost Estimate; EIS & NHPA 106

Dear NEPA Call-In User:

This letter is in response to your September 12, 1997 request for information about the cost of cultural resource assessments and environmental impact statements (EIS). You heard that the National Office tracks the cost of these and other types of assessments. You have received a bid from a contractor for a cultural resource assessment for compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). Specifically, you would like to know how much other regions have paid for cultural resource assessments in order to better assess the bid. You would also like cost information for EISs.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

NEPA Call-In identified cost information for cultural resource assessments and EISs. We found the cost to prepare environmental studies such as cultural resource assessments and EISs varies widely depending upon the size, location, and the type of project, as well as the scope of the study. Cost comparison is not appropriate unless similar SOWs are compared in similar labor markets. The GSA Environmental Quality Advisory Group (EQAG) Member for Region 7, offered to review your scope of work (SOW) in order to evaluate the cost estimate. Our detailed findings are provided below.

DETAILED FINDINGS

NEPA Call-In contacted the Director, GSA NEPA Program, Division of Cultural and Environmental Programs, GSA National Office, for information about the cost to perform environmental studies. The director stated the cost to perform an environmental study such as an EIS or cultural resource assessment can vary widely depending upon the size, location, and the type of project, as well as the scope of the study. The director provided "Environmental Compliance Analysis, Planning and Project Development," October 25, 1996 (enclosed). This document contains cost information for environmental assessments (EAs), EISs, environmental site assessments (ESAs), site environmental checklists, environmental audits, and archaeological surveys from GSA Regions 1-7. The cost for archaeological surveys ranged from below \$100,000 to \$150,000. The cost for an EIS ranged from \$25,000 to \$200,000. The director cautioned that it would be wrong to presume one could extrapolate appropriate compensation from previous prices paid, and that one should perform a level of effort of analysis based on the scope of work and the level of employee required.

We also obtained cost information for cultural resource assessments and EISs directly from several GSA regions. The GSA EQAG Member, Region 7, stated he recently negotiated a contract to performs several surveys including a cultural resources "walkover," for \$17,000. However, the EQAG member also stated he has seen where an archaeological survey alone cost in excess of \$250,000. The EQAG member stated he would be happy to look over your scope of work and help determine if the cost estimate is appropriate. He suggested you contact him directly.

The EQAG Member, National Capitol Region, stated a historical structural report for a small commercial building in her region cost \$47,000. An intensive architectural survey, photographs, and preparation of Maryland State Site Inventory Forms were \$217,940. This was a multi-building site,

including 3 sizable but fairly simple government office buildings, a 1930's house converted into offices, and 9 small insignificant structures.

A representative from GSA Property Disposal, Region 5, stated she has had cost estimates for EISs for the construction of a small border station facility between \$90,000 and \$225,000, and estimates for major construction of courthouses from \$500,000 to \$750,000. The EQAG Member, Region 4, stated the base price for an EIS from his two term contractors is around \$52,000, but that the cost usually runs about \$75,000 after negotiation. The Branch Chief, Courthouse Project, Property Development, GSA Region 10, stated they are working on an EIS at this time and the cost is about \$600,000.

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Sincerely,

(Original Signed)

NEPA Call-In Researcher